

## **How to Help: Show You Think Education and Homework Are Important**

Children need to know that their parents and adults close to them think homework is important. If they know their parents care, children have a good reason to complete assignments and turn them in on time. There is a lot that you can do to show that you value education and homework.

### **Set a Regular Time**

Finding a regular time for homework helps children finish assignments. The best schedule is one that works for your child and your family. What works well in one household may not work in another. Of course, a good schedule depends in part on your child's age, as well as individual needs. For instance, one youngster may work best in the afternoon after an hour of play, and another may be more efficient after dinner (although late at night, when children are tired, is seldom a good time).

Outside activities, such as sports or music lessons, may mean that you need a flexible schedule. Your child may study after school on some days and in the evening on others. If there isn't enough time to finish homework, your child may need to drop some outside activity. Homework must be a high priority.

You'll need to work with your elementary school child to develop a schedule. An older student can probably make up a schedule independently, although you'll want to make sure it's a good one. It may help to write out the schedule and put it in a place where you'll see it often, such as the refrigerator door.

Some families have a required amount of time that children must devote to homework or some other learning activity each school night (the length of time can vary depending upon the child's age). For instance, if your seventh-grader knows she's expected to spend an hour doing homework, reading, or visiting the library, she may be less likely to rush through assignments so that she can watch television. A

required amount of time may also discourage her from "forgetting" to bring home assignments and help her adjust to a routine.

### **Pick a Place**

A study area should have lots of light; supplies close by, and be fairly quiet.

A study area doesn't have to be fancy. A desk in the bedroom is nice, but for many youngsters the kitchen table or a corner of the living room works just fine.

Your child may enjoy decorating a special study corner. A plant, a brightly colored container to hold pencils, and some favorite artwork taped to the walls make study time more pleasant.

### **Remove Distractions**

Turn off the television and discourage social telephone calls during homework time. (A call to a classmate about an assignment may, however, be helpful.)

Some youngsters work well with quiet background music, but loud noise from the stereo or radio is not OK. One Virginia junior high school history teacher laments, "I've actually had a kid turn in an assignment that had written in the middle, 'And George Washington said, "Ohhhhh, I love you."' The kid was so plugged into the music that he wasn't concentrating."

If you live in a small or noisy household, try having all family members take part in a quiet activity during homework time. You may need to take a noisy toddler outside or into another room to play. If distractions can't be avoided your child may want to complete assignments in a nearby library.

### **Provide Supplies and Identify Resources**

For starters, collect pencils, pens, erasers, writing paper, an assignment book, and a dictionary.

Other things that might be helpful include glue, a stapler, paper clips, maps a calculator, a pencil sharpener, tape, scissors, a ruler, index cards, a thesaurus, and an almanac. Keep these items together in one place if possible. If you can't provide your child with needed supplies, check with the teacher, school guidance counselor, or principal about possible sources of assistance.

For books and other information resources, check with the school library or local public library. Some libraries have homework centers designed especially to assist children with school assignments (there may even be tutors and other kinds of individual assistance).

These days many schools have computers in classrooms, and many households have personal computers. However, you don't have a to have a computer in your home in order for your child to complete homework assignments successfully.

You may want to ask the teacher to explain school policy about the use of computers—or typewriters or any special equipment—for homework. Certainly, computers can be a great learning tool and helpful for some assignments. They can be used for word-processing and online reference resources, as well as educational programs and games to sharpen skills. Some schools may offer after-school programs where your child can use the school computers. And, many public libraries make computers available to children.

## **Set a Good Example**

Children are more likely to study if they see you reading, writing, and doing things that require thought and effort on your part. Talk with your child about what you're reading and writing even if it's something as simple as making the grocery list. Tell them about what you do at

work. Encourage activities that support learning—for example, educational games, library visits, walks in the neighborhood, trips to the zoo or museums, and chores that teach a sense of responsibility.

## **Show an Interest**

Make time to take your child to the library to check out materials needed for homework (and for fun, too), and read with your child as often as you can. Talk about school and learning activities in family conversations. Ask your child what was discussed in class that day. If he doesn't have much to say, try another approach. For example, ask you child to read aloud a story he wrote or discuss the results of a science experiment.

Another good way to show your interest is to attend school activities, such as parent-teacher meetings, shows, and sports events. If you can, volunteer to help in the classroom or at special events. Getting to know some classmates and other parents not only show you're interested, but helps build a network of support for you and your child.